CONCLUSION

Nowadays, materialism is steadily eroding moral and spiritual values. The influence of materialism reaches even the remote areas of the world. When materialism erodes the higher spiritual dimension of life, a plunge into moral nihilism is bound to follow.

We can see this situation in the alarming statistics characteristic of materialist society: in the increased rate of suicide, in the explosion of crime, in the proliferation of sexual offenses, alcoholism, and drug abuse. This shows that a one-sided stress on material development in a pleasure-seeking society is ultimately self-destructive, like a piece of iron that is devoured by the rust arising from within itself.

Although people in the affluent countries enjoy high standards of goods and services, the inward quality of their lives does not bear evidence of a corresponding level of improvement. The reason for the poverty of their interior life is the neglect of moral and spiritual values.

No doubt, material values are indeed required for establishing a better life and better world. But, they must be kept in their proper places, as requisites of a better life and better world. They are by no means the main concerns of a better life and better world. They are subordinate to moral and spiritual values for a better life and better world. It is only the cultivation of a proper
sense of moral and spiritual values that can make human society cultured and civilized in the true meaning of those terms.

Buddhism counsels us to purify our conduct and our minds for the establishment of a better life and better world. Buddhist moral and spiritual principles for a better life and better world are within the framework of Buddhist ethics and meditation.

Buddhist ethics and meditation are intended to guide us how to put an end to the constant cycle of rebirths in which we undergo the manifold kinds of suffering ultimately and how to live happily and peacefully in this very life we are leading now.

Buddhist ethics and meditation indicate self-discipline and self-purification respectively. The former serves as guard for one’s actions while the later serves as trainer for one’s mind. The systematic practice of Buddhist ethics will foster the growth of the wholesome moral qualities. The high degree of commitment to the practice of Buddhist meditation increases the pace of spiritual progress. The practice of Buddhist ethics and meditation will conduce to the ultimate best interest of oneself, and help one to make his life a blessing for others as well.

Buddhist ethics and meditation represent moral and spiritual guidelines given by the Buddha. Those guidelines enable us to mold our whole personalities and characters, to instil the true principles of righteousness into our understanding, to train the emotions and to discipline the will, thereby enhancing moral and spiritual values.
By following those guidelines, we will grow in all aspects of life; we will become well-rounded human beings in a competitive world; and we will be able to establish a better life and better world.

Human life is the most valuable asset to us. According to Buddhism, it is really hard to get birth in human form. The Buddha states thus:

“Suppose, O, monks, a man were to throw down a yoke with one hole into the ocean, and in that ocean, there were a blind turtle that popes up to the surface once at the end of a hundred years. How do you think, monks? Can a blind turtle popped up to the surface once at the end of a hundred years push his neck through that yoke with one hole?”

“After a long time, Lord, the blind turtle may do that sometime.”

“It would be quicker, O monks, that a blind turtle popped up to the surface once at the end of a hundred years will push his neck through the yoke with one hole than that one fallen into the woeful states after death will get birth in human form. Why? The reason is that there is no chance to practise righteousness and to perform meritorious deeds.”

Now indeed, we win the state of human birth. But, it is really necessary to pass our human life-span meaningfully and to use our human potential to the full for the good of ourselves and others. To

\[^{221}\text{Samyutta Nikāya, Mahāvagga Samyutta, p-397.}\]
make our human life meaningful and to use our human potential for our own good and others’ as well, we need to improve moral and spiritual qualities- the qualities of a well-developed man; in other words, we need to live a moral and spiritual life.

In this connection, we require an honest understanding of ourselves developed by self-observation and self-examination. It means we should find out objectively that to what extents we have the requisite qualities for establishing a better life. The more we find out about ourselves by self-observation and self-examination, the better will be our chances of self-improvement.

Further, nothing is stable and certain in life. Death is the only absolutely stable and certain thing in life. It means death is inevitable; all beings must die one day; and none escapes from death. The Buddha states as follows:

“Maraṇaṁ dhuvarī, jīvitaṁ addhuvarī; Maraṇaṁ niyataṁ, jīvitaṁ aniyataṁ.- Death is stable, but life is unstable; Death is certain, but life is uncertain.”

“Sabbe sattā maraṇadhammā maraṇapariyosānā maraṇaṁ anafītā. All beings are subject to death; they have deaths as their ends; and they cannot surmount death.”

“Natthi kho, jātassa aṅñatra jarāmaraṇā.- There is none who is freed from old-age and death after birth.”

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222 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, Vol-II, p-111.
223 Saṁyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga Saṁyutta, p-98.
224 Saṁyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga Saṁyutta, p-70.
Then, the question is: “Why should we get greedy and angry when we live?” “Should we lead a virtuous and upright life, thereby contributing to the welfare of humanity and the world, before we die?”

Truly indeed, we should observe the moral conduct; perform many kind and generous acts; and endeavor to lessen greed, hatred and delusion and to enhance generosity, good-will, and wisdom. The fact that we lead a pure life both morally and spiritually will be a real source of contribution to the welfare of humanity and the world.

The Buddha’s teaching, Dhamma, is the art of happiness here immediately and the path to deliverance from sufferings ultimately. It therefore is a noble way of life which should be followed by everyone.

Moreover, Dhamma is the most rational and consistent plan for wholesome living. It is not based on dogma or blind faith, but on facts and verifiable conclusions. It therefore is a reasonable way of life which should be attractive to any thinking person.

It should be remembered here that Dhamma is not merely to be studied and to be preserved in books, but to be practised and realized as Buddhism lays more emphasis on practice and realization than on study and preservation in books.

The Dhamma he taught is not merely to be preserved in books, nor is it a subject to be studied from an historical or literary stand-point. On the contrary, it is to be learnt and put into practice
in the course of one’s daily life, for without practice one cannot appreciate the truth. The Dhamma is to be studied, and more to be practised, and above all to be realized; immediate realization is its ultimate goal.\textsuperscript{225}

The Buddha says: “Yathāpi ruciraṁ pupphaṁ, vaṇṇavantaṁ agandhakaṁ, evaṁ subhāsitā vācā, aphalā hoti akubbato.- Just as a beautiful flower with colour but without delicate fragrance, cannot produce the fruit of fragrance for one who wears it, even so, well spoken words (piṭaka) are fruitless for one who knows them but does not practise them. Yathāpi ruciraṁ pupphaṁ, vaṇṇavantaṁ sugandhakaṁ, evaṁ subhāsitā vācā, saphalā hoti kubbato.- Just as a beautiful flower with colour and delicate fragrance, can produce the fruit of fragrance for one who wears it, even so, well spoken words (piṭaka) are fruitful for one who not only knows them but also practise them.”\textsuperscript{226}

Moreover, Dhamma is not to be believed dogmatically, worshipped and prayed, but is to be mastered, gone by and practised through contemplative reasoning and analysis because according to Buddhism, as there is no external agency acting as a saviour and every individual has to strive individually for one’s own well-being, worship and prayer are of no avail.

The doctrine is not to be dogmatized and worshipped. The pragmatic value of the teachings is stressed throughout. What the Buddha taught is not to be taken as a magical formula, the

\textsuperscript{225} Narada Thera, \textit{Buddhism in a Nutshell}, p-13.
\textsuperscript{226} Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, verses- 51/52.
utterance of which requires many ritualistic performances and ceremonies. The doctrine is, therefore, to be mastered and practised.  

The mere fact of accepting or observing Buddhism intellectually will not ensure happiness and security. To yield its fruit, the Buddha’s teaching has to be utilized intelligently and constructively in all the activities of our daily life. It has to be adopted, adapted, and applied until all its basic principles are absorbed and made habitual by repeated practice, for just a theoretical knowledge of Buddhism is insufficient in itself to yield its fruit.

Buddhism contributes to the world in material and spiritual wealth. In its teaching, Buddhism has no features to confine it to any particular nation or any particular country as the Buddha preached the Dhamma for the welfare and happiness of all human beings. It is universal in its appeal. The aim of Buddhism, as well as the methods for achieving its aim, is universally applicable to all human beings.

If we fully practise the Dhamma, that contains Buddhist ethics and meditation, we will absolutely able to make our life and our world better.

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